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State Dept. Obstructing Cambodia Aid

Jimmy Carter's sanctimonious sermons on human rights have become a cruel mockery to millions of Cambodians, who are dying of starvation and disease—helpless pawns being sacrificed in the deadly chess game of big-power politics.

Despite assurances from the Carter administration that the United States would give food to Cambodians "irrespective of their political authority," officials within the State Department have deliberately sabotaged this humane policy, according to a wide variety of sources.

"The problem has been that people in lower levels, specifically in the East Asian desk, have been doing nothing but obstructing efforts to aid the Cambodians," one Capitol Hill source told our reporter Lucette Lagnado.

The Foggy Bottom bureaucrats have been blaming legal and congressional roadblocks for their inaction. But the real reason, according to our sources, is a deep-seated anti-Vietnam bias in the State Department.

Apparently it was feared that some relief supplies might fall into the hands of the Vietnamese invaders, helping them solidify their authority in Cambodia. Rather than run the risk, our callous diplomats chose not to implement the massive food program needed to prevent the virtual extinction of the Cambodian people.

The anti-Vietnamese "tilt" in the State Department was recently reflected in the shameful U.S. vote to seat the infamous Pol Pot regime in the United Nations, despite the evidence—which we have been reporting for more than four years—that it was responsible for the slaughter of mil-

lions of Cambodians since it seized power in 1974.

For reasons of global strategy, the United States deems it important to join the Chinese in support of Pol Pot, and oppose the rival government set up by Soviet-backed Vietnamese troops. "It was more important for us to give the Soviets a diplomatic kick than it was for us to feed the people," charged one knowledgeable source.

It's not as if the horrors of Cambodia's starving millions came as any surprise to our policymakers. The State Department has known since at least March that the unhappy country was facing a food shortage of catastrophic proportions, according to sources in the department and Congress. Intelligence reports informed the administration that only 5 to 10 percent of Cambodia's arable land was being planted last spring.

This was confirmed by a secret CIA report in early August, which offered the narrowing prediction that as many as 3.5 million people would starve to death as a result of poor harvests next December and January. Other reports indicated that typhus and malaria were decimating the population. There are virtually no children under age 5, and for every birth there are 10 deaths.

Footnote: Robert Oakley of the State Department's East Asian bureau denied that his office had failed to implement the policy on food aid to Cambodia. "The Vietnamese wouldn't let us" distribute the relief supplies, he said, and the program was hampered by strict monitoring procedures insisted on by Congress.